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VIA MATRIS

OR

The Way of our Lady,

AS PRACTISED IN THE

CHURCHES

OF THE

SERVANTS OF MARY.

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*Standing in front of the Statue of our Lady of Dolours the following is said at the commencement :*

*Ant.*—Come O Holy Spirit fill the hearts of thy faithful, and kindle in them the fire of thy love.

*V.*—Send forth Thy Spirit, and our hearts will be regenerated.

*R.*—And thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

*V.*—Remember Thy congregation.

*R.*—Which Thou hast possessed from the beginning.

*V.*—O Lord, hear my prayer.

*R.*—And let my cry come unto Thee.

*V.*—The Lord be with you.

*R.*—And with Thy Spirit.

LET US PRAY.

Enlighten our minds, we beseech Thee O Lord, with the light of Thy brightness, that we may know what we ought to do, and may be able to do what is right, through Christ our Lord.

*Now, dear brethren, let us commence our spiritual exercises, devoutly meditating upon the seven Dolours which the blessed Virgin Mary underwent in the life and death of her dear beloved son, our Redeemer.*

## ACT OF CONTRITION.

Most afflicted Virgin ! How indifferent have I been towards my God during my past life ! How ill have I corresponded with his innumerable benefits ! But now, indeed, I repent, and in the bitterness of my heart and in the grief of my soul, I humbly beg pardon of Him for having so outraged his infinite goodness, resolving, with the divine grace, never more to offend Him in future. Ah ! by all the grief thou didst undergo in the cruel passion of thy dear Jesus, with ardent sighs I entreat thee to obtain for me from Him mercy and compassion in regard to these my most grievous sins. Accept this holy exercise which I am about to perform, in memory of those sorrows and of that pain thou didst suffer in the passion and death of thy Son Jesus. Oh ! grant me by those swords which pierced Thy soul, that they may also pierce mine, and that I may both live and die in the friendship of my Lord, and so be a partaker of the glory which He has gained by shedding His most precious blood.—Amen.

O Mary ! of my soul thou sweetest treasure,  
 Print on my heart thy sorrow without measure.

## DOLOUR I.

*In the first Dolour the soul should betake herself to the Temple of Jerusalem, at the time when the most amiable Virgin heard the prophecy of the aged Simeon.*

## MEDITATION.

Ah! what a shock it must have given the heart of Mary to hear those words of holy Simeon foretelling the bitter passion and dreadful death of her most sweet son Jesus; seeing at the same time, as she did in spirit most clearly, the affronts, mockeries, and cruelties which the impious Jews would practise against the Redeemer of the world. But wouldst thou know which was the sword that penetrated most deeply her afflicted heart on this occasion? It was foreseeing the ingratitude men would show her dear Son in return for all his goodness. Reflect then, that thou, by reason of thy sins, art unhappily among this number, and casting thyself at the feet of this most sorrowful mother, address her with tears in these words.

Alas! dearest Virgin, who didst feel such anguish of spirit at the misuse which I, an unworthy creature, should make of the blood of thy most loving Son; grant, I conjure thee, by thy most afflicted heart, that in future I may correspond with divine mercy, may reap profit from Heavenly grace. and that I may not receive in

vain so many lights and inspirations from above, and that thus I may happily be of the number of those for whom the bitter passion of Jesus will be the cause of their eternal salvation.—Amen.

Hail Mary! full of grace, our Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus!

Holy Mary! mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.—Amen.

*O most sorrowful Virgin! pray for us.*

O Mary of my soul thou sweetest treasure,  
Print on my heart thy sorrow without measure.

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## DOLOUR II.

*In this Dolour the soul should represent to herself that most harassing journey which the Blessed Virgin undertook to Egypt to remove Jesus from the cruel persecution of Herod.*

## MEDITATION.

Consider the bitter distress our Lady must have felt on being, under the instructions of the angel, required to set out at once in the night time, upon her journey in order to save her son from the slaughter ordered by this cruel prince. Ah! how she must have started, passing through the wilderness, at every cry



of a wild animal, and at even the noise of the wind among the leaves, and how her blood must have chilled in her veins ; see her snatching glances at either side of the path, now hastening her steps and now skirting shady places to keep out of sight, in dread of being overtaken by the soldiers and having her most beloved infant torn from her arms and barbarously butchered before her very eyes ; how she must have fixed her affrighted gaze upon Him, and strained Him eagerly to her bosom with a thousand kisses, heaving deep sighs of anxiety.

But here reflect, O my soul ! how many times thou hast renewed all this anguish of our most afflicted Lady by compelling her son to leave thee by committing grievous sin. Turn then now to her with deepest sorrow and say :

Alas ! my most sweet mother, only once did Herod compel thee and thy Jesus to flee away from the inhuman persecution he raised, but how many times have I obliged my Redeemer and consequently thee also, to depart suddenly from my heart, introducing therein instead, detestable sin ; that un pitying enemy of thee and of my most good God ! But behold me now grieving and contrite, and seeking pardon. Take pity on me, dearest Lady, and I promise thee, with the divine assistance, to maintain my Saviour and Thee in future in the complete possession of my soul.—Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace! our Lord is with thee—blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, mother of God! pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.—Amen.

*O most sorrowful Virgin, pray for us.*

Oh, Mary! of my soul thou sweetest treasure,  
Print on my heart thy sorrow without measure.

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### DOLOUR III.

*In this third Dolour the soul should contemplate the most afflicted Virgin as she went forth weeping in search of her lost son.*

### MEDITATION.

How intense must have been the anguish of Mary when she perceived she had lost her most amiable Son. And how this anguish must have gone on increasing as she failed to find him in the most careful search she made among her relations and friends. Heedless of inconvenience, fatigue and dangers, she was wandering for three days through the country of Judea, repeating all the way those words of the spouse in the Cauticles "Who hath found him whom my very soul doth love?" Her anxiety and love as she sought and resought him, would make her at

each moment, imagine she heard his dear voice, or saw His dear form, and then, Oh the sinking of heart at finding herself mistaken, experiencing with still greater force the reality of her sad loss.

Feelest thou here no confusion, O my soul ! at the many times thou hast lost thy Jesus by grievous omissions and sins, and neglected all attempts to go away at once quickly to find him again, showing how little thou dost esteem his divine friendship. Bewail then thy blindness and, turning to that sorrowing mother, say to her :—

Ah most afflicted mother ! let me learn of thee the true way of going in search of Jesus whom I have lost by listening to my passions, and to the wicked suggestions of the devil, so that I may succeed in finding him ; and when I return after recovering Him, I will repeat continually those words of the spouse, “I have found Him whom my soul loveth, I will retain Him for ever and will not let him go” ! —Amen.

*Hail Mary, &c.*

*O most sorrowful Virgin pray for us.*

O Mary ! of my soul thou sweetest treasure,  
Print on my heart thy sorrow without measure. ■



## DOLOUR IV.

*In the fourth dolour the soul should contemplate the meeting of the sorrowful Virgin with her suffering Jesus.*

## MEDITATION.

Come near, ye hard hearted ones, and try if you can help weeping at this most harrowing spectacle. It is a mother the most tender and the most affectionate, who meets her most gentle and loving son. But how does she meet him? O God! surrounded by an impious mob who hurry him on to death. He is covered with wounds, smeared with blood, His flesh raw with scourging, and a circlet of thorns upon His head, faint and tottering under the weight of a heavy cross which presses upon His shoulders, and appearing to be at His last gasp each step he moves. Ah, my soul! see that agonizing pause the holiest Virgin makes on the first look she fixes on her tortured Son; she wishes to bid Him one last farewell, but grief seems to have deprived her of utterance. She would throw herself on his neck but she is paralysed by the force of her affliction. Oh that she could relieve herself by a flood of tears, but she is so overpowered by the shock that she can not shed even one. Who is there that could be unmoved at the sight of a poor mother in such a state. But who can be the cause of such bitter woe? Oh, it is I; I who by my sins have aimed this cruel blow at the

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